Did you have a diary as a kid? I did. I just wasn't ever very good at it: 'Dear Diary, School was boring today. When I got home, I ate crackers and watched TV. It was a good day.' Yep, pretty scintillating stuff. However, if I'd had something as lovely as this French General Journal in which to pen my deepest thoughts, I'm sure it would have been much better: 'Dearest Diary, Today was an educational minefield. When at last I made it back to the safety of hearth and home, I was able to relax with both sustenance and entertainment at the ready. Stupendous all around.' Try it for yourself. Turn a plain spiral notebook into your own inspiring journal with our step-by-step instructions.

This project is a bit more advanced than most you'll find here at Sew4Home, but we've included lots of pictures and careful notes about measuring and assembling. Read through the steps a couple times before you start to absorb all the details. Then... you can do it; I know you can!

You can find a great selection of Moda's beautiful French General fabric online from our friends at FatQuarterShop. Our thanks to them for supplying all the fabric for our French Desk Set tutorials.

**Sewing Tools You Need**

- Any Sewing Machine (we recommend the Janome MC5200)

**Fabric and Other Supplies**

- ½ yard 44-45” wide fabric for journal front, inside pen pocket, and inside business card pocket: *we used Moda's French General Rouenneries in Turkey Red Josephine*

**NOTE:**

Josephine was recently discontinued by Moda but is still available at some outlets. It comes in a variety of colors besides the
Turkey Red, and any number of other French General patterns would be gorgeous for this project.

- ⅓ yard 44-45” wide fabric for journal lining: *we used Moda’s French General Rouenneries in Wovens Pearl Silky*
- ⅓ yard heavyweight fusible interfacing: *we used Pellon’s Décor Bond*
- 1-1/8 yard of soft leather or ribbon for bookmark: *we used scraps of moccasin leather*
- One ¾” - 1” button: *we used a faux stone two-hole button*
- One charm to weight the end of the bookmark: *we used a carved feather*
- Spiral notebook: *we used a 100 sheet 9½” x 6½” Mead notebook*
- Cardboard
- All purpose thread
- Contrasting thread for topstitching (optional)
- See-through ruler
- Fabric pen or pencil
- Iron and ironing board
- Scissors or rotary cutter and mat
- Straight pins
- Tape measure
- Size 14 sewing machine needle
- Curved hand sewing needle
- Point/Tube turner (optional)

**Getting Started**

The measuring and rounding up of the measurements is to give the notebook room to open and close within the journal cover. You need to be accurate in your measurements and cutting. We’ve provided the measurements for our sample, but be sure to take your own and make whatever changes needed to account for any differences in your spiral notebook.

**Measuring time**

1. Open your notebook on a flat surface. Measure the width and height with your tape measure. Write down these measurements. Ours measured approximately 13-5/8” x 9-5/8”.

![Image of a spiral notebook being measured with a tape measure.](image-url)
2. Close your notebook. Wrap the tape measure around the notebook from the edge of the front cover, over the spirals, to the edge of the back cover. Write down these measurements. The height of the notebook will be the same whether it's open or closed. Ours measured approximately 14¾", which we rounded up to 15" x 9-5/8".

3. Now, we need to get the thickness, or page depth, of the notebook, so we can account for this part of the wrap-around and create a pen pocket within the space. Ours measured approximately ½", we rounded up to ¾".

4. You also need to decide how far over you want the front flap to overlap. This is based on personal taste, but it should come over far enough to to lay flat. We used our tape measure to determine this, and decided we liked the look of 3½".
5. One final thing we need to measure for is the portion of the journal cover that folds over, making the front and back pockets that hold the notebook in place. Using your tape measure, determine how much of the notebook you want to cover. We decided to make ours 5½” because that overlapped most of the cardboard front and back of the notebook, but still allowed us enough room to slide the cover on the notebook.

Math time

Using the measurements above, we can figure out the cut size of our pieces.

Width

1. 15” (journal width open) + ¾” (page depth/pen pocket) + 3½” (front flap) + 5½” (front inside cover) + 5½” (back inside cover) + 1” (seam allowance) = 31¼” wide. But, wait a minute, not so fast ...
2. We need to double two measurements where the cover folds over to create the back inside cover, page depth/pen pocket, and flap. (You may not understand this now, but once you make your journal you will!) Those two measurements are the pen pocket and flap. So we need to add another ¾” (page depth/pen pocket) + 3½” (flap) = 4¼”
3. Our final cut width is 31¼” + 4¼” = 35½”

Length

1. The length is simple! We rounded our height measurement of the journal to the next close ¼”. So, our original 9-5/8” measurement was rounded up to 10”.
2. 10” (journal height) + 1” (seam allowance) = 11”
3. Cut a 35½” x 11” piece from the journal fabric, lining fabric, and décor bond.
NOTE: If your fabric has a directional print, you'll need to pay attention to this. Mark your fabric top with a fabric marking pencil on the wrong side to keep track of which way is up.

Make the pockets

Pen pocket

1. We determined the size of our pen pocket based on the thickness of the notebook and how we planned to construct the pocket.
   NOTE: We used ¼” seams for all the pockets.
2. We have ¾” of width in our journal cover. We need space for the pen to actually fit into the pocket, so we added on another ¼”.
3. 1” (pen pocket) + ½” (seam allowance - ¼” on either side) = 1½”
4. After looking through some of our pens, we decided to make the height of our pen pocket 4”. Since we plan on using one strip of fabric to make the pocket, we need to double this measurement. (Again, when you construct your journal cover you'll understand why we're doing this ... ya just gotta roll with me for now.)
5. 4” (pen pocket height) x 2 = 8” + 1” (bottom seam allowance - the bottom of the pen pocket is sewn into the bottom seam of the cover) = 9”
6. Cut one 1½ x 9” strip from the journal fabric.

Inside front cover business card pocket

1. You can vary the size of this pocket to suit your needs. We decided on a business card size pocket with a finished size of 2½” wide x 4” high.
2. Cut a 3” (finished width plus ½” for the two ¼” seam allowances) x 8½” piece from the journal fabric. (Once again, the height here is determined by how we construct the pockets - double the finished height plus ½” for the two ¼” seam allowances.)
3. Cut one 3” x 8½” strip from the journal fabric.

Bookmark and Tie

1. We sew a length of the leather (you could also use ribbon) into the seam of the journal at the top to be used as a bookmark. Based on our notebook measurements, we cut a 9½” length for this. You could go a little longer if you really want it dangle out.
2. For the tie, you'll need a 28” length of the leather if your notebook is the same size as ours. If you're using a different size notebook, you'll need to use your tape measure to determine the appropriate length. It must go around the entire notebook with enough left to wrap once or twice around the button to secure and still leave a bit of a tail.

At Your Sewing Machine & Ironing Board

1. Iron the Décor Bond interfacing to the wrong side of the journal cover fabric piece.

Bookmark

1. The bookmark and pen pocket are sewn into the seams of the journal cover. You'll need to position these in place
PRIOR to sewing the cover together.

2. To help us determine the correct position for the bookmark, we layered and pinned the journal cover and lining together (as if already sewn). We then wrapped it around our journal and marked the position where we wanted the bookmark to be. For our sample, that position was 15” from the left raw edge on the top of the journal lining. We placed a mark at this point with our fabric pencil.

   NOTE: Don’t forget to account for your ½” seam allowance.

3. Pin the bookmark at the marked position. Baste in place.

   NOTE: Since our bookmark is leather, we had to tape it in place instead of pinning.

---

**Pen pocket**

1. Fold the pen pocket piece in half lengthwise (this is why we cut the strip twice as long), right sides together. Pin in place.
2. Using a ¼" seam allowance, sew along each long side, backstitching at the top and bottom. Clip corners
3. Turn right side out. Push out the corners. Press.
   NOTE: It's helpful to use a turning tool to turn this piece right side out since it's so narrow.

4. Sew ¾" from the top folded edge, backstitching at beginning and end of your stitching. We did this as a decorative finish and so it would match the business card pocket.

5. Mark the position the pen pocket along the bottom edge of the lining piece, following the same method as we used for the bookmark above, however, this measurement is more critical than the bookmark because you want to be sure the
pen pocket falls in the middle of the page depth wrap around. For our sample, we positioned the pen pocket 6½” from the right raw edge on the bottom of lining piece. Pin and baste in place.

Inside cover business card pocket

1. You construct the inside cover business card pocket in the same manner as the pen pocket. Fold the pocket piece in half lengthwise, right sides together.
2. Using a ¼” seam allowance, sew along each long side, backstitching at the top and bottom. Clip corners.
3. Turn right side out. Push out the corners. Press.
4. Sew ¾” from the top folded edge, backstitching at beginning and end of your stitching to match decorative finish of the pen pocket.
5. Fold in both bottom raw edges ¼” - so they are flush with the sewn seams. Press and pin bottom to hold edges together. Set aside.

Journal body

1. Place the journal cover and lining, right sides together. Be sure the pen pocket and bookmark are neatly tucked in between the cover and lining. Also, be sure to pay attention to any directional fabric designs.
2. Using a ½” seam allowance, sew around the journal cover, pivoting at the corners. Be sure to leave a 9” opening along the bottom to turn right side out.

NOTE: Sew with the lining side down toward the feed dogs, because your lining fabric is not stabilized and, depending on the accuracy of your cutting, may seem (or actually be) slightly larger. The feed dogs will help to ease in the excess. ANOTHER NOTE: Make two marks along the bottom edge of the journal, somewhere in the middle that are spaced 9” apart. Start sewing on first mark, go around the journal cover, and stop at the second mark. This will help you to
3. Clip the corners on an angle, turn right side out. Push out the corners. Press well.

4. Press in the raw edges at the 9" opening ½" so they are flush with the sewn seam. Pin the raw edges together to hold in place.
   NOTE: Don't forget we've sewn the pen pocket and bookmark into the seam. You'll need to pull these out into position.
   We recommend pinning the pen pocket to the body of the journal for now (on the outer fabric) to keep it in position.
5. Lay the journal cover flat on your work surface with the lining facing up.
6. Fold in the right side 10" (5½" back cover + 1" pen pocket space + 3 ½" flap). Press.
7. Fold in the left side 5½" (remember, this is the measurement we determined way back when for the front cover 'pocket'). Press.
8. Decide where you would like your inside cover business card pocket to be placed. We thought ours looked good 1” in from the front folded edge and 1¼ from the bottom. Pin the pocket in place.

9. Re-thread your machine with your contrasting topstitching thread.

10. Using an edgestitch, sew the inside cover pocket in place. Just making sure you're awake ... BE SURE TO UNFOLD THE COVER BEFORE YOU SEW! You do not want to sew through to the right side of the journal cover.

11. Re-fold and pin the front cover in place. Press if needed.

12. Using a edgestitch, sew around the outside edge of entire journal cover.
   
   NOTE: We recommend lengthening your stitch here to get through all the layers. You also may need to “walk” the machine by turning the handwheel to get around the corners where the layers are very thick. We're lucky because the Janome machines we use go right through all these layers.

13. Lay your journal cover flat on your work surface with the inside facing up.

14. You need to take some new measurements so you know what size to cut the cardboard insert that goes into the flap.

15. Measure between your stitches from top to bottom on the right side to determine the length you need to cut the cardboard insert. Ours measured 9¼". We cut the width 2½” - one inch smaller than our original flap width measurement of 3½".
16. Cut the cardboard based on your measurements. We cut ours 9¼” x 2½”.
17. Insert the cardboard strip into the right 'cover pocket' and slide it all the way in until it is snug against the right outside fold.

18. Re-pin the pen pocket into its appropriate position. The right edge of the pen pocket should be approximately ¼” from the left edge of the cardboard insert. You should be able to feel the cardboard inside the fabric. Make sure the pocket is straight; it should be perpendicular to the bottom sewn edge.

   NOTE: When you pin the pen pocket in place, make sure it is not perfectly flat against the cover or there will be no room for your pen. Pinch it slightly to create a bow.

19. Using a ruler and a fabric marking pencil, draw a straight line along either side of the pen pocket straight to the top of the journal cover.
20. Using a straight stitch, sew on the marked line. You will be creating the 'page depth edge' of the journal cover, enclosing the cardboard into the flap, and attaching the pen pocket all at the same time. Three things at once ... you are so clever! NOTE: We switched out to a zipper foot so we didn't catch the edge of the cardboard when we stitched this vertical line.

**Tie and button closure**

1. Using a curved hand needle, sew the button on the center of the flap about 1" from the sewn edge.

2. Hand sew the leather strap on the opposite side of the button.
3. Hand sew a small ornament to the end of the bookmark.

4. Insert the spiral notebook into the cover and write down your innermost thoughts.
5. To close, wrap the tie around the journal and loop once or twice around the button.

Hints and Tips
If you're new to sewing, check out these helpful tutorials:

- Understanding Interfacings
- How To Sew On A Button

Contributors
Project Design: Alicia Thommas
Sample Creation and Instructional Editing: Jodi Kelly

Tags:
- French Desk Set
- Fabric Art & Accents
- French Desk Set: Pencil Cups
- French Desk Set: Blotter
- French Desk Set: Fabric Matted Frame
- French Desk Set: Basket Liners

This project and patterns (if any) may be downloaded for personal use only. No electronic or printed reproduction permitted without the prior written consent of Sew4Home LLC.